

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 131030Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6877

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2090

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, IN, PK

SUBJECT: IMPACT OF REPORTS OF POSSIBLE U.S. CHANGE IN ARMS
POLICY ON INDIANS

1. ASIDE FROM SOME FRENETIC EDITORIALS AND COMMENTARIES
IN THE PRESS, INDIAN REACTION TO REPORTS THAT THE U.S.
IS THINKING SERIOUSLY OF A CHANGE IN ITS ARMS SALES POLICY
IN THE SUBCONTINENT HAS BEEN RELATIVELY SUBDUED THUS FAR
BUT SIGNS OF GOI HARDENING ARE BEGINNING TO APPEAR.

2. MEA JOINT SECRETARY TEJA TOLD ME YESTERDAY, WHEN I
REFERRED TO OUR WILLINGNESS TO CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT ON UP
TO A \$200,000 GRANT FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRAVEL
TO THE U.S., THAT IN VIEW OF "POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS," HE
THOUGHT THAT THE GOI MIGHT NOT WISH TO CONSIDER SUCH AN
AGREEMENT FOR THE TIME BEING. HE PARTICULARLY MENTIONED THE
LARGE NUMBER OF PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS HE EXPECTED ON THE
ARMS SALES ISSUE. WHILE EMGASSY CONTACTS IN MOST OTHER
MINISTRIES WITH WHICH WE DEAL HAVE THUS FAR EVINced NO SIGN
THAT ANYTHING BUT "BUSINESS AS USUAL" IS IN ORDER, I SUSPECT
THAT TEJA'S ATTITUDE PROBABLY REFLECTS GUIDANCE FROM AT
LEAST THE FOREIGN SECRETARY. I AM UNCERTAIN WHETHER IT
MAY BE EXTENDED TO AREAS OTHER THAN AID, WHICH HAS BEEN ON
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DEAD CENTER FOR A LONG TIME.

3. THE GOI PROVIDED US THIS WEEK WITH TENTATIVE FOLLOW-UP DETAILS ON THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SUBCOMMISSION AND THE SENIOR INDIAN OFFICIAL INVOLVED EXPRESSED PERHAPS UNINFORMED CONFIDENCE TO THE EMBASSY'S SCI COUNSELOR THAT U.S. ARMS SUPPLY POLICY WOULD NOT DISRUPT COOPERATIVE ACTIVITY IN HIS AREA. WE ARE STILL AWAITING SIMILAR "FOLLOW-UP" INFORMATION FROM THE FINANCE MINISTRY IN CONNECTION WITH THE ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL SUBCOMMISSION.

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4. AS MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT BEGIN STREAMING BACK INTO DELHI FOR THE OPENING OF THE SESSION FEB. 17, CRITICAL COMMENTS BY POLITICIANS WILL PROBABLY MOUNT. PRESS STORIES FEB. 13 REPORT SERIOUS CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE RESUMPTION OF U.S. "ARMS AID" TO PAKISTAN WAS EXPRESSED BY UNNAMED MP'S AT A FEB. 12 MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON DEFENSE. DEFENSE MINISTER SWARAN SINGH, THE ONLY GOI MINISTER THUS FAR TO TAKE A CONSISTENTLY SHARP PUBLIC ATTITUDE ON THE ARMS SUPPLY ISSUE, AGAIN REITERATED HIS VIEW OF A POSSIBLE CHANGE IN U. S. POLICY AS "A GRAVE ERROR" AND A "FATAL STEP." THUS FAR NO CONGRESS PARTY MP'S HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY NAME AS COMMENTING ON THE ARMS QUESTION ALTHOUGH THREE SOCIALIST PARTY MP'S ISSUED A STATEMENT CONDEMNING A U.S. POLICY CHANGE. AS THE GOI'S POSITION AND THAT OF MRS. GANDHI BECOME CLEARER IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, CONGRESS MP'S WILL CERTAINLY BEGIN TO CHIME IN WITH THE "LEFTIST" CONGRESS FACTION TAKING THE LEAD.

5. IN RECENT DAYS, SOME LOWER-LEVEL DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE GIVEN SOME HINT OF CONCERN THAT A CHANGE IN U.S. ARMS POLICY MIGHT RESULT IN A FREEZING OF THEIR DEALINGS WITH THE U.S., BUT THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE REACTION OF MORE SENIOR OFFICIALS. ACTIVE OFFICERS IN ALL SERVICES HAVE SHOWN NO SIGNS OF IRRITATION, OR EVEN CURIOSITY, TO EMBASSY SERVICE ATTACHES. THE ONLY PEOPLE TO SPECIFICALLY RAISE THE MATTER WITH US HAVE BEEN NEWSPAPERMEN.

6. OTHER INDIAN GROUPS, PARTICULARLY THOSE NOT ASSOCIATED WITH GOVERNMENT, HAVE NOT BEEN RAISING THE ARMS ISSUE WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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US AT ALL AND, IN GENERAL, SOCIAL AND OFFICIAL CONTACTS WITH INDIANS CONTINUE UNCHANGED.
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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